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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 005751

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [JA](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JAPANESE DIPLOMAT REPORTS BAGHDAD NORMAL, BASRA
BUSTLING, AND MFA HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT DIRECTOR COMING TO
THE REGION

REF: AMMAN 5490

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

Baghdad, Basra and Points In Between

11. (C) On October 2, a source in the Japanese Embassy's Iraq Division provided A/Polcouns a readout of his recently completed three week visit to Iraq. The source had been in Iraq from September 7 to 27 and had traveled from Baghdad to Basra and back by car September 14-16. Overall, he said that the atmosphere throughout the country was "remarkably normal." He didn't perceive any noticeable difference in Baghdad from his last visit in June. The security presence in the city was unchanged from earlier in the summer (offering a different impression from that of USINT Chief Bernacki (ref)) and Baghdad's hotels were full of foreign visitors (including a Japanese musical troupe -- a first, he noted), there for the Babylon festival.

12. (C) On his trip to the south, he said he was surprised by the relatively good condition and bustle of Basra. He had expected to see a "devastated city." Instead, he found a city "full of street traffic and souks quite full of goods." He saw no obvious military presence in the city during the day he was there. These impressions were very different, he noted, from those he had of a trip to Mosul earlier in the year where he had found streetlife comparatively quiet and the military/security presence much stronger.

13. (C) The 9/14-9/16 trip south took him through Karbala and Najaf enroute to Basra and via Misan and Kut on the way back. Karbala and Najaf, like Basra, were full of people -- both Iraqis and Iranian pilgrims. All the shops were open even though the day they passed through both cities was a Friday. The one area where he said he encountered an overt military presence was "in the middle of Misan province" where he saw quite a number of soldiers.

Upcoming Regional Visit of Japanese MFA Humanitarian Chief

14. (C) On the issue of preparations for any possible U.S. military action against Iraq, he told A/Polcouns that Tokyo is dispatching a Mr. Kawakami, Director of the International Humanitarian Support Division of the Japanese MFA, to the region to assess potential needs and how Japan could help address them. Kawakami will arrive in Jordan from Syria on October 12 and then depart to Israel on October 14. While in Amman he intends to meet with officials from the MFA, the Ministry of Interior, and possibly the GID. Kawakami will be in Geneva October 7-8 to discuss Tokyo's humanitarian strategy in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia with Japanese diplomats from posts in those regions, and with Geneva-based humanitarian agencies.

GNEHM